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INTERNATIONAL TRADE, EXPORT PROMOTION, SMALL BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TO: MINISTER NG

FROM: ZACHARY NIXON

SUBJECT: FREEDOM CONVOY PROTESTS

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2022

CC/REVIEWED BY: JILLIAN WHITE

Minister,

This note provides you with views regarding the Freedom Convoy Protest in Ottawa for use in your discussions in Cabinet and in Caucus.

Background:

- This protest first began in response to the border vaccine requirements for truckers, but has since expanded to be a protest against all COVID-19 restrictions.
- Conservative politicians have grasped onto this original idea of the protests as a means to tie these protests into their wider agenda – inflation, supply chain disruption – and to locate these actions in their wider narrative of a government that cares little for affordability issues.
- Their view ignores key details with respect to the organizers of the Convoy (Pat King – an anti-vaxxer with well documented white supremacist views; Tamara Lich – of the Maverick Party, which advocates for the separation of the West from the rest of Canada; and Benjamin Dichter an anti-vaxxer and former PPC and CPC candidate).
- The organizers of these protests hold fringe views, which range from a removal of all COVID “mandates” to the overthrow of the sitting Government. Spotted frequently at the protest, now termed an “occupation” by many residents of Ottawa, are a range of right wing symbols, commonplace at right and far right gatherings across North America.
- The impact on businesses and people has been significant. Businesses in the “red zone” (Byward Market to Centretown) have lost business either because their businesses have been captured by the blockade or citizens do not want to leave their homes. One business owner, who owns a spa, reported that he has lost 90% of his

business. Employees who work at the Rideau Centre cannot go to work because it is closed are out of a paycheque.

- After 9 days of non-stop honking and blocking the streets of Ottawa, police are now attempting to cut off food and fuel resources from those who have not left the Capital.
- The objective of this is to “starve” out those who have been most committed to their protest.

Government Response:

- RCMP and PPS stay in close contact with provincial and municipal police.
- It is not the role of politicians to direct police forces.
- In circumstances that exceed the capacity for police, there are mechanisms in place for them to request support.
- Federal Government has answered all requests for assistance.
- On February 6th, the City of Ottawa declared a State of Emergency and the Government of Canada has offered to convene a trilateral table with municipal and provincial partners.
- Building on ongoing coordination and collaboration.
- Over 275 RCMP officers have been made available to help Ottawa Police.
- Minister Alghabra has been working with Provincial counterparts.
- Provinces have extensive regulatory powers over commercial trucking – for example, suspending commercial licenses and insurance of owners blockading streets and highways.

My Recommendations:

- It is important that the Federal government communicate that their primary objective is to secure Ottawa. This means working with the Province and Municipality using policing methods to deter new protesters from joining and remove those that are still blockading downtown Ottawa.
- It is important to Canadians that the laws are enforced and order is maintained. This is evidently not the case – drinking in the street, illegal parking, illegal storage of fuels, and noise bylaw violations are just some of the laws being broken. Governments need to show that the laws will be enforced to restore the confidence of citizens.
- The Federal Government should communicate daily with the public until the last “Freedom Convoy” protester has left Ottawa. It is important that the protest is not ignored and that the concerns of the residents of Ottawa and those watching understand that the Government takes this very seriously.
- The Government should not pursue a solution that appears to be overreaching or aggressive (military). The Convoy is supported by, depending on the poll, at least 20% of the population and it is not well understood. The Convoy has a significant social media presence and support online, and much of this is attributable to a great deal of misinformation being circulated as to the objectives of the Convoy and distrust of the

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mainstream media. An overly aggressive response would galvanize these people and lend credence to those claiming that the Government is “anti-freedom”.

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